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STRAY REMINISCENCES OF A
LONG LIFE.

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By MEDICUS SENEX

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EARLY DAYS.

“THE clang of legions” on the fateful field of Waterloo had joined the category of past events (although not the long distant past, when the writer of these pages first saw the light in a quiet inland Scottish town,* where the currents of ordinary everyday life were somewhat sluggish in their flow, and where the prevailing types of thought and action were not a little antiquated.

From fragmentary notices which have come down to us, it might not be difficult to present a fairly accurate picture of social customs and manners as they existed at the time and place indicated; just as the famous French naturalist, Cuvier, could, from a solitary bone of some extinct animal, mentally reconstruct its entire osseous framework, and endow his ideal creation with the attributes of life. But let specific local details give place to a cursory survey of general facts, as these lie on the surface of our national history.

When the writer first opened his infant eyes, he looked out on a world very different in all respects from what exists around us during these closing years of the nineteenth century.

Great Britain had then but recently emerged from a long and arduous struggle for national freedom and independence, which had cost her untold treasure and the best blood of many of her sons. She was now enjoying a much-needed breathing space, during which to recruit her exhausted energies and to prepare for starting anew on the path of advancement. Amid much that was depressing in the general condition of affairs from the cause just indicated, and while national life in every form was low and flickering, there were not wanting elements in the political outlook fitted to inspire hope of a gradual, and

not distant, recuperation. Napoleon Bonaparte, long the arch-foe of Britain, and the terror and foe of every European nation, had been withdrawn from the stage on which for a long series of years he had been the most conspicuous actor, and was now under strict watch and ward as a State prisoner in the remote and lonely Island of St. Helena, where he stood pilloried in the eyes of the whole civilised world. His aggressive domination was over, and his marvellous history was approaching its close. At this distance of time we can but very imperfectly estimate the prominent part which he played during the hey-day of his power on the great theatre of the world's affairs. But of this there can exist no doubt, that the name of Napoleon Bonaparte will go down to remote posterity, indelibly stamped on the page of history, as one of the most wonderful incarnations of high military genius, in combination with towering ambition and gigantic daring, that the world has ever seen or endured.

At the time referred to, George III. was still King, although for a number of years previous the honours and responsibilities of the Throne had, by an Act of Regency, been transferred to his eldest son and heir, the future George IV. Neither the death of the aged Sovereign in 1820, nor the coronation of George IV. the following year, is among the personal reminiscences of the writer, but he can recall with distinctness the great national event of the subsequent year (1822), viz., the visit of King George IV. to Edinburgh. This event almost turned the heads of our sober-minded countrymen. Whether due to enthusiasm, overflowing loyalty, or high-wrought curiosity, yet so it was, that, despite the difficulties and cost of travelling in those days, great multitudes fought their way to Edinburgh, both by land and sea, to enjoy the supreme satisfaction of seeing the King!

Whether the after fully-developed character of His Majesty as one of the most accomplished and shameless debauchees of the age would have toned down the fervid admiration of his loyal subjects, we need not stop to inquire.

Let us now pass from national and general history, to mark the current of family and individual life—and here let a few remarks suffice.

The writer was one of a family which ultimately attained the magnitude of six sons and four daughters. It may be legitimately inferred from this statement that for long years there had to be borne within the home weighty parental burdens—of care, anxiety, and toil. Such burdens none can evade, who, with not too ample means, are charged with such responsibilities.

The writer, the last survivor of this numerous family, has good reason to cherish with affection and gratitude the memory of his parents. Their character adorned the sphere in which Providence had placed them, and proved an incalculable blessing to those committed to their charge. In their early days, towards the beginning of the present century, the facilities existing in small provincial towns for acquiring ordinary education were few, compared with those of the present day. All the more did both parents appreciate the value of educational privileges, and strive to secure their advantages to their family. This involved long and strenuous efforts, and doubtless, at times, real sacrifices. All the more to their honour the aim which they cherished and the course which they pursued. It is but simple justice to their memory to say that they habitually regarded the Divine Word as "a lamp to the feet and a light to the path"; and that they faithfully strove to bring their teaching and example into harmony in the daily duties of family life.

The parental home was, after a few years, transferred from the town into the country, where it was to become, in after days, a scene of life's varied experiences, both of sorrow and joy.



SCHOOL LIFE.

THE years of childhood, one by one, passed away, and the time at length arrived when desultory lessons at home must give place to regular instruction at school. The writer was accordingly placed at a seminary in the neighbouring town, where tuition in the primary branches of education was given.

The teacher, who was well known in his special sphere, was in several ways a unique specimen of the *genus homo*. In one respect, Nature had been generous to him. She had dowered him with two gleaming, lustrous eyes, which were potent factors in maintaining the order and good government of the school. Perched aloft in his little *rostrum* at one end of the school-room, he would at times make swift ocular side-excursions over the benches; and woe betide the unhappy boy who at such a moment was detected practising some mischievous trick on his fellow-pupils around him! In resonant and imperative tones he was at once summoned to the bar of justice, where forms of judicial procedure were few and simple. No need for citing witnesses, since "the Master" himself had been a spectator of the deed! Indictment, conviction, and condign punishment followed in such quick succession that they appeared simultaneous. And when all was over, and law and justice were duly vindicated, the young culprit was remanded to his tasks, cherishing, doubtless, a lively impression of the authority and power which resided in the personality of the diminutive pedagogue.

Indeed, no one durst despise him, or dispute his prerogatives. During school hours his physiognomy for the most part wore an aspect of sternness, expressive of a conscious sense of official dignity and importance. But a flash from

those wonderful eyes would at times relax that sternness, and invest his features with a transient brightness; just as carriage lamps after nightfall momentarily dispel the gloom of a darkened roadway.

As indicated above, this teacher was a rigid disciplinarian, and some of his methods of inflicting punishment on refractory boys would hardly bear the brunt of modern criticism. Assuredly they would not obtain the favourable verdict of School Boards and Government Inspectors. But in those long past days such functionaries did not disturb the body politic, for the sufficient reason that they were not then, nor for long after, in existence. Teachers were then very much left to follow the bent of their own "sweet will." It must be confessed that although at times unnecessarily severe, this teacher on the whole did his work with exemplary fidelity and diligence. He taught the proverbial three R's conscientiously and perseveringly, and this to many an unpromising boy whose whole education was begun and finished under his hands, and who in after-life cherished towards him respect and gratitude. The writer knew him well in the evening of his days, more than forty years ago, and enjoyed and valued his friendship.

After having apparently exhausted the benefits to be derived from this primary school, the writer was transferred to the Parish, or Grammar, School of the town—thus reaching a new stage in school-boy life, entering on new tasks, and forming new and wholesome associations. This Grammar School was then, and had been for many years, presided over by a gentleman who was at once a scholar, an admirable, painstaking teacher, and an estimable man.*

He was held in the highest regard in the town in which he conducted his labours and in the surrounding district: and the best families placed their sons under his tuition and care. By admirable systematic arrangement and unflagging diligence, he managed to overtake his multifarious duties and to conduct his diversified classes with efficiency and success. On the benches of the school-room you might find junior pupils busy in conning the most rudimentary tasks, while

* Rev. George Alexander, who died in 1877.

you might also find others—a select few—bending over the pages of the *Anabasis* or fighting their way through the problems of Euclid. But this accomplished and excellent teacher, who was an M.A. of Aberdeen, seemed always equal to his work. He never appeared to stagger under the heavy load of daily toil which the custom or the thoughtlessness of those days laid upon him. He neglected nothing and slurred over nothing, but faithfully supervised the different departments of work which passed in daily review before him. If he excelled in anything, it was as a teacher of Latin. He had acquired his knowledge and love of the language at Aberdeen, which long held undisputed sway as one of the chief centres of *latinity* in Scotland.

To his more advanced pupils it was deeply interesting to observe with what zest he threw himself into the work of Latin instruction, and what real pleasure it gave him when he found any of his pupils entering with appreciation into the structure and beauty of the grand old Roman tongue. But never did a teacher set himself more sternly against all *scamp work*. The lessons prescribed had not only to be learned *memoriter*, but so intelligently grasped as to become for all future time a conscious and intelligent possession. His *drill* by means of “Analysis” and “Versions” was admirable; and as genuine mental discipline to youths in their teens, could hardly be surpassed. His pupils, however, for the most part had nothing more than begun to realise their privileges when they found them brought to a premature close. It was the mistaken and injurious practice of those now distant days to remove mere boys from the Grammar School, sending them thence to Universities or places of business, before sufficient time had been allowed to lay the foundation of a liberal training, broad and deep as it ought to have been. This custom abridged the usefulness and reputation of the Grammar School, handicapped Professors in their efforts to impart higher learning, and seriously injured the future success in life of those who were prematurely deprived of the special advantages of our excellent Grammar Schools. *Cæsar*, *Livy*, *Virgil*, and other models of ancient classic literature had just begun to spread their treasures before

young minds, ready to be fascinated by their charms, when all had to be relinquished and other work begun. Doubtless attempts were often for a time afterwards made to build upon the foundation laid, to supplement what was wanting, and to complete what had been begun. But it is to be feared that such attempts were often fitful in their character, and unsatisfactory in their results, showing how true it is that each stage of life has its own special work to be done, which cannot, without loss and damage, be relegated to some future day.

Here it may not be inappropriate to remark that of his class-mates and school companions—all nearly of similar age and standing—the writer knows of only one still alive.* He has in his eye a highly respected member of the legal profession in the Scottish Metropolis, whom he still has the privilege to call his friend.

* Mr John Henry, W.S., Edinburgh, who died after the above was written.



IN THE MASTER'S SURGERY.

AT the time to which reference is made, and long after, what is known as "medical apprenticeship" prevailed in almost all our provincial towns. Raw lads in their early teens were indentured, usually for three years, to general practitioners, who kept open surgery, and compounded and dispensed their own prescriptions. Abuses were, no doubt, connected with this system, but its wholesale condemnation is unjust. It had its advantages and disadvantages. On the whole, it seems a mistake that it has been so generally abandoned. Not only did it afford an opportunity of learning the art of drug-compounding, but much minor surgery was seen, and a familiarity was attained with much of the routine of daily medical life. Facilities were also afforded by books and anatomical preparations for preliminary medical study, which served as a good preparation for the more serious work to be afterwards encountered. Any class honours the writer subsequently succeeded in obtaining were largely due to the quietude and leisure enjoyed from time to time in his master's surgery.

The practitioner to whom he was apprenticed* was famous in his day and generation. The late Professor Syme—no mean judge—used to speak of him as one of the most distinguished provincial surgeons in Scotland. For many years his name was a talisman among rich and poor, in town and country. His handsome and striking presence, his genial, kindly manner, and his winning smile exerted a power and witchery over his patients which were often irresistible. He had ways and methods of his own in the treatment of diseases, based at times on theories which seemed far-fetched and ideal; but it was always worth while listening to what he had

* Dr Alexander Guthrie

to say, even when you felt constrained to differ from him. It might not be expedient blindly to adopt his views; but it was always wise to "mark, learn, and inwardly digest" them. Over the wide area which his practice covered, his name was a household word, and numerous clients, attracted by his fame, came from long distances to receive the benefit of his mature experience.

During the lengthened period of his practice—fifty-seven years—in his native town, he had a long series of apprentices, or articulated pupils, the majority, if not the whole, of whom brought no discredit on their eminent master. Some of them found their sphere of labour at home, others in the public services abroad.

About ten years before his death, they combined to present their old preceptor with a handsome carriage, and subsequently the general public and numerous clients and friends celebrated his jubilee by costly gifts and sumptuous feast—the duly recognised and time-honoured mode of signalling noteworthy events and of giving expression to gratitude and gladness.

Fully a quarter of a century has passed away since his departure, but his name still lives as a pleasant memory in the town and county where his work of active beneficence was so long carried on. Such of his pupils who still survive, whether engaged in active professional work, or spending the evening of their days in the shades of retirement, will fondly and gratefully cherish the name and memory of one who first guided their faltering steps into professional paths, and who aided in nurturing their new-born aspirations. One of those pupils, after the lapse of more than three-score years, here makes most willing acknowledgment of his deep obligation to his early instructor, and revered and departed friend.



GLASGOW COLLEGE.

SMALL as Scotland is on the map of Europe, it can boast of possessing four Universities, of venerable age and ever-growing fame.

Three of these embrace within their walls fully equipped Medical Schools; and of the three, two have to maintain a wholesome rivalry with Extra-Mural teachers. By the latter, all the departments of medical education have for many years been ably and efficiently conducted.

Edinburgh, from a variety of causes, especially from its being the Scottish Metropolitan centre of education, has attracted to itself a larger number of students than either of its sister Universities. Among its Professors, for more than a century there have been men of such pre-eminent genius and renown as to cast somewhat into the shade admirable occupants of Chairs both in Glasgow and Aberdeen. And hence it was often a foregone conclusion, when the future career of a medical student came to be deliberated on, that Edinburgh University and its Extra-Mural School should attract him within their portals.

Of the long series of pupils who served the usual medical apprenticeship with his old master, the writer knows of no one besides himself who did not subsequently pursue his medical studies in Edinburgh. In his case, the prescriptive usage was departed from, and Glasgow was chosen as his place of study, the scene of his preparation for the after serious duties of professional life. Such a choice was mainly determined by the fact that in the great city of the West he had not a few relatives at whose homes, during times of respite from study, he would be a welcome visitor, and where he would enjoy an influence for good. Such a forecast

was amply verified. In the several domestic circles into which he had thus the privilege of entry he found pleasure and relaxation, and received kindness which can never be forgotten. But to one of those family circles he felt more specially drawn. With vividness of memory and deep affection, after the lapse of more than threescore years, he recalls the happy intercourse and genuine friendship he there enjoyed; and he feels it no exaggeration to affirm that the influence for good of the hours spent in that attractive and genial family circle remains to this day. The head of the household—the writer's uncle by marriage—was one whom it was a privilege to know, and who wielded a wholesome and an abiding influence on those around him, especially, it may be said, on the young. Of high character, extensive knowledge of men and affairs, marked courtesy, and unvarying and considerate kindness, he seemed, unconsciously to himself, and without effort, to be ever promoting the happiness of those around him. Of his three young sons who constituted the sparkling lights and joy of his house, two, alas! “are not.” But one, happily, remains*—the honoured and patriarchal head of numerous descendants, and now enjoying, in full and merited degree, a serene and happy old age, with its proverbial accompaniment of “honour, love, obedience, troops of friends.” The writer of these lines rejoices to add that throughout all the vicissitudes of more than threescore changeful years, the warm and much-valued friendship of his esteemed relative has endured.

Three winter sessions, beginning with 1832-3, were spent at medical classes in Glasgow, those classes being partly within the University and partly in the Extra-Mural School.

Throughout those student years, eager bands of rising youth, full of life and vigour, and doubtless animated by high hopes for the future, thronged the benches of the Glasgow Medical School, as they have done since and continue to do; but the writer knows only one who was his contemporary then, and who has come down to the present day.† And it

* Mr George Walker, Wimbledon, who died in 1904

† Dr William Walker, who died at Bridge of Allan towards the end of 1896.

is no small pleasure to him to record that neither a lengthened residence in Australia, nor very chequered experiences, both of sorrow and joy, have abated the strength or cooled the warmth of a friendship which has survived the lapse of more than sixty years.

At the time when the writer first set foot in Glasgow, there were many admirable Professors and Lecturers who were held in deservedly high estimation. They cannot all be even named in this brief sketch; but as representative men, it may be allowable to mention Dr John Burns and Dr Thomas Thomson in the University, and Dr Robert Hunter in the Andersonian College. The last-named was almost a model lecturer. He was lucid, eloquent, and most instructive—one to whom a large class of students listened day by day with rapt and unwearied attention. He clothed Anatomy with charms which it was not thought previously to possess; and its study was henceforth prosecuted, not as a repellent, although necessary, task, but as a deeply interesting theme, carrying you into the arena of life and organisation.

In the Extra-Mural School there were, at the time, other names of more or less distinction. Suffice it to mention Dr Lawrie and Dr Pagan, both of whom, in after years, became University Professors; Dr Stirling, Dr Thomas Graham, chemist (afterwards of London); and the able and estimable Dr James Wilson. These were all men who were well-known and highly-esteemed in their day and generation, and who fulfilled their functions faithfully and well.

Dr John Burns was passing his best at the time the writer joined his class in the University. His prelections did not awaken enthusiasm. He had been placed in a Chair (Surgery) for which he had never exhibited any special aptitude; instead of being appointed to one (Obstetrics) which he would have adorned. But Dr John Burns was known far beyond the limits of the Surgery Chair. He was one of Glasgow's distinguished sons and well-known physicians, of whom his fellow-citizens were justly proud; and for long years he commanded a large share of public notice and respect. His *personnel* was striking; and, once seen, he could not be forgotten. His features were grave, thoughtful, and dignified,

occasionally brightened by a play of humour in which he was fond of indulging, but his humour was acquired, rather than innate; and his stories, which were rather quaint, were apt to lose a little of their flavour and piquancy by too frequent repetition. He evidently loved whatever enhanced his individuality. Hence he assiduously cultivated the antique in dress and manners. As he rode in his carriage in full view of all passers-by—his head uncovered, his beautiful grey hair daintily dressed backwards from brow to neck, with old John the charioteer, whip in hand, on the driving-box, he was a daily and well-known spectacle to the lieges in all parts of the city. His sudden and tragic end in the wreck of the “Orion,” on the Clyde, in 1850, was a melancholy close to a long, useful, and honoured career, and was deeply mourned, not only by all classes of his fellow-citizens, but by the nation at large.

Dr Thomas Thomson, Professor of Chemistry at the time of which we write, had achieved a European reputation. In some respects, and at the first, he did not attract as a lecturer. His voice was husky, and his manner was not an embodiment of the graces; but his teaching was full of interest and instruction, and the numerous students who daily assembled in his class-room in College Street eagerly drank in his words, and watched with delight his beautiful demonstrations. His name still lives in the domain of Science, and will long be cherished by the University which enjoyed the lustre of his fame.

In those days there were two things noticeable in medical student life in Glasgow, to which, in passing, we may point attention—first, the strength of the Irish element; and, secondly, the number of merely amateur students to be found in the classes. It was not unusual to discover, as the session went on, that this or the other member of any given class was not a *bona-fide* medical student who wished to qualify himself for entering the profession after duly passing through the required curriculum, but only a *quasi* student, who was attending classes as a mere pastime, and whose heart and soul were engaged in some more lucrative calling in the region of Argyle Street or the Broomielaw! One, whom the writer

knew well, carried on business as a silversmith in the Tron-gate, and another was the proprietor of a third or fourth-rate restaurant in the Candleriggs. There was something comical in the writer's connection with this fellow-student and *purveyor*. It fell out thus. A Students' Society for reading of papers and for discussion and debate existed in the Andersonian College, and one of the meetings, at which he was present and took some part, was presided over by a somewhat portly, comfortable-looking gentleman, alias medical student, who read a paper on "Rheumatism," the peroration of which, the writer well remembers, was a laudation of flannel! When the discussion was over, he invited a number of his audience to spend a short time with him at his house. Moved a good deal by curiosity, his invited guests followed his lead. By-and-bye they arrived at a large and commodious room below the level of the pavement—in other words, his place of business! Not a little surprise was felt at the novelty of their position; but the party, as best they could, adapted themselves to their surroundings. They were hospitably entertained with oysters and coffee—nothing stronger! What with speech, sentiment, and song, the time passed swiftly, and the strike of the midnight hour found this improvised and happy party still enjoying this memorable symposium! It may be regarded as having been prophetic of the more admirable Students' Unions of the present day.

Glasgow had much in its daily activities to develop and strengthen intellectual life among its citizens. Young men, imported into it from quiet country towns, soon felt the throb of its varied movements, and became conscious that a new epoch in their lives had begun. Doubtless, the starting-point in many a career of distinction is the stimulus furnished by residing for a longer or shorter period, at a susceptible age, amid the awakening influences of a great city. Such influences Glasgow possessed in abundant measure. Very notable men lived and laboured within its walls when, on a raw November morning in 1832, the writer first set foot in the great city. The speed and comfort of railway travelling was then unavailable, and the resources of civilisation

could provide nothing better to one in his circumstances than a long, weary, benumbing journey on the top of the mail coach! Does the present generation duly estimate its privileges?

The men of distinction in the city, at the time referred to, comprised, in the first place, the University Professors, with such names—in addition to those mentioned—as Jeffrey, Badham, Buchanan, Thomson (Natural Philosophy), etc., whose fame in literary and scientific circles has come down as a heritage to the present day. It will not be deemed invidious if, in addition to the Professoriate already mentioned, the name of Sir Daniel K. Sandford should receive a conspicuous place. He filled a large space in the public eye, not only in his own special sphere, but also as a somewhat ambitious and bustling politician. In the latter capacity, it is generally allowed, he was not a success; whereas, as the Glasgow Professor of Greek, his fame is enduring.

The Glasgow pulpits, at the time referred to, had many eminent occupants. Let it suffice to mention the names of Dr Wardlaw, Dr William Anderson, Dr Heugh, Dr John Forbes, besides others throughout the city who shone with almost equal lustre. Most of them were then in their vigorous prime, and in the zenith of their fame and usefulness. The high services rendered by these men to the cause of truth and the interests of philanthropy can scarcely be overestimated. And the moral and Christian forces at work in the city received, in the following year (1833), an important accession of strength by the advent of the Rev. David King, afterwards Dr King. As successor to the Rev. John Dick in North Greyfriars Church, he was at once, and while still young, placed in a position of commanding influence. He did not belie the expectations which were formed regarding him. His brilliant career—all too soon terminated—as a preacher, an author, and devoted philanthropist, has left its mark in the annals of the city, and his name will continue to be held in honoured and enduring remembrance.

All these eminent men were towers of strength within their respective circles, ecclesiastical and social; and in their day they wielded a mighty power in the great city. From

time to time they felt constrained to buckle on their armour and plunge into the thick of controversies. These were of varying interest and importance, and often deeply stirred the heart of the great community. "There were giants in those days," "mighty men of valour," who contended with heart and soul in what they deemed the cause of truth and justice and freedom. Not Glasgow alone, but the nation at large, is still reaping the fruits of those herculean conflicts.

In those days Glasgow, although a city of fully 200,000 inhabitants, was only beginning to be fully developed. Since then it has increased three, if not four-fold. In every department of municipal life its progress has been quite phenomenal. Measures to promote the moral and physical well-being of its citizens, especially of its industrial classes, have been ever progressing and multiplying. The city now possesses a system of intra-vehicular traffic of which, sixty years ago, it knew nothing. By its water supply, now so abundant, its system of drainage, its supply of sanitary dwellings, how great the advance in the comfort, the health, and the amenities of its inhabitants! As a result of what has been achieved, the death-rate has been reduced, and epidemics of the former malignant and deadly type are comparatively unknown. How greatly the city has been indebted to the enlightened zeal and active enterprise of its successive civic rulers, who shall estimate? All honour to the men by whom such wonderful amelioration has been achieved!

But other proofs of wonderful progress and advancement by the Scottish Western Capital may easily be advanced. Its new and handsome streets, its terraces and crescents, where, half a century ago, there existed green fields and rural solitude, and its gorgeous new Municipal Buildings, all attest the opulence and enterprise of the great city. And when, in addition to these, we turn our eyes to the stately and imposing pile, the renowned Temple of Learning which dignifies and adorns Gilmore Hill; and when, further, we see the two spacious and admirable Infirmaries erected in recent times in the West and South of the city, we have abundant evidence how great has been the impulse which revolving years have imparted to every section of the vast community.

The ever-increasing wants of civilisation and the urgent claims of philanthropy have been munificently responded to by princely gifts and devoted labours; and Glasgow, from its magnitude and its achievements, may justly assert the proud pre-eminence of being the second city of Britain's great and flourishing Empire.



IN THE FAR NORTH.

THE writer would here with all brevity refer to a memorable episode in his life which took place during the summer of 1834 — that intervening between his second and third winter sessions at Medical Classes. He alludes to a voyage made by him to the Arctic regions as surgeon to a whaling vessel. Of course, it is easy to censure as a rash procedure for a youth not out of his teens to undertake such responsibility. But it was the custom of the times, and one perhaps too lightly thought of. And yet, as a matter of fact, "the Doctors" on board the whaling vessels—young men only partially through their studies—managed, without any special shortcoming, to discharge their duties to the satisfaction of all parties, securing the regard and gratitude of officers and crews.

The voyage, whether to Greenland or Davis' Straits, was full of novelty and excitement. The scenes to which it introduced were impressive and grand in the extreme. Nature was beheld under new and striking aspects. All was in such bold and vivid contrast to ordinary hum-drum home life that it seemed as if one had been abruptly transported to another planet! Vast ice-fields stretching away far beyond the ken of eye or telescope; lofty icebergs proudly lifting their glittering summits to the sky; majestic ramparts of high precipitous cliffs, capped with eternal ice and snow, forming the distant frowning coast-line; and beyond all, and above all, the midnight sun, blazing as at noonday, and pouring down a flood of radiance over the desolate scene around—all this combined to produce on the youthful mind an impression of wonder and awe which words would fail to describe, and which the lapse of more than sixty years has been unable to efface. To be able to say of such wonders, "Ipse video"—to behold with one's own eyes the marvellous

phenomena which high latitudes reveal—was worth migrating from the old country for a few months in summer and encountering the perils of the frozen sea.

There was much in the daily life of the brave and hardy tars comprising the ship's crew to arrest attention and excite deep interest. On reaching the "fishing ground," on the western side of Davis' Straits, there were the daily excursions of the ship's boats in search of whales—their capture being the greatest object of the voyage; there was the excitement of the chase when they came into view; the death-and-life struggle when first a harpoon, and then a sharp and burnished spear or lance, had been plunged remorselessly into the side and vitals of the whale; and, finally, the chorus of loud and jubilant voices which rent the air when it was seen that the art and skill of civilised man had triumphed over the supreme forth-putting of most formidable power, and that the great Goliath of the deep lay a lifeless form in the water. The mighty cetacean had been met and vanquished in his own northern stronghold; for neither the depths of Arctic seas, nor the panoply of Arctic ice-fields, had availed to save him from a fatal encounter with man, to whom, as the appointed lord of creation, has been delegated "*dominion over the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.*"

One of the excitements of Arctic navigation in those olden times must not be forgotten—namely, what was known as "tracking the ship." The vessel had been made fast to an ice-floe, with open water around. By-and-bye it was perceived that the ice had begun to close in upon the vessel, and that certain destruction awaited her unless extricated with all speed from her perilous position. In the absence of steam, and without, perhaps, any wind at the time to fill the sails, what was to be done? A strong rope or hawser was securely fastened to the bow of the ship, and run out for many yards ahead, and the men, marching in single file on the ice, attached themselves firmly to the rope by means of belts fastened around their waists, and in this way they hauled, or tracked, the ship. They kept time by singing some ditty, and on they marched, and on they pulled, until the vessel

reached the open water, and was once more in safety. But it has often happened that crews were too late, and that ships were crushed to pieces by the resistless force of the ice-floes. Indeed, this was the history of the majority of shipwrecks in the Arctic seas.

More than once our men were stirred to exertion in this united effort to rescue the ship from impending danger by the music of our Highland bagpipes! It may be easily imagined how strange it was to meet with this familiar acquaintance under such novel circumstances—acting the part of an efficient ally and friend amid the emergencies of Arctic navigation, and, by its skirling sound and monotonous drone, waking the echoes within fifteen degrees of the Pole! It is needless to say that the introduction of steam into our whaling industry, while it has enhanced the safety of life and property, has abolished such scenes as above described, with all the romance which belonged to them.

“In perils oft” during the four and a half months we remained in the country, we were yet mercifully preserved from loss or damage. We “bore up” on the 10th October, and after a pleasant homeward voyage, we safely reached our port of departure by the early days of November, in time for the writer to recommence class work in Glasgow the following week.



TYNESIDE.

AT the close of the session 1834-35, another stage in life's journey was reached. It had been the writer's intention to make a second Arctic voyage during the summer of 1835, to attend additional classes in 1835-36, and to close with a summer course in 1836. But this programme was unexpectedly broken through. One of his teachers, the late Dr William Weir, had been requested to find a student well advanced with his studies to go to a town* in the North of England to assist a gentleman in large practice who had fallen into delicate health, and he offered the appointment to the writer of these pages. The offer was accepted, and a new era begun.

One un-looked-for event followed on the wake of another, for in three months after, the Edinburgh College of Surgeons, on due examination, conferred on him the status of a duly qualified practitioner of Medicine.

With a prior and senior assistant to the same gentleman a medical partnership was, shortly after, formed; and at an early—too early—age, they then presented themselves for public patronage and support. It is easy, with the larger knowledge of the present day, to censure such premature acceptance of the responsibilities of professional life. But sixty years ago, lax ideas and conduct in such matters were only too common, and we were dominated by the opinions which prevailed around us. In the centre of a large and growing community, upwards of six years were spent in this Collegiate Doctorship. The practice was very varied, but chiefly medical. The writer and his partner* felt happy in their mutual relations, and in their daily work; and in hours of leisure they enjoyed most pleasant intercourse with those

* South Shields.

* Dr J. F. Kennedy, who died at Newcastle in 1878.

around them. Twice it fell to the writer to do a layman's part in public affairs—first, in helping forward, in 1839, a public movement in favour of Rowland Hill's projected Penny Postage Scheme; and, next, in taking part in a Course of Popular Lectures in the Mechanics' Hall of the Burgh. Both these efforts were considered conducive to the general weal, and so far elicited the approbation of fellow-citizens.

The Scheme of Penny Postage, propounded by Rowland Hill, was such a thorough reformation of our former oppressive Postal System that it evoked enthusiastic support from all classes. The petition in its favour, which the present writer helped to promote, after being very numerously signed by his fellow-citizens, was forwarded to the M.P. for the Burgh for presentation to Parliament. The letter acknowledging its receipt is still in his possession. It enters fully into the merits of the scheme, and discusses its probable national results. That letter is now an interesting historical document, and a valued souvenir of days long gone by. It bears date of 13th May, 1839, and is duly franked.

The letter is as follows:—

Dear Sir,—Very shortly after I received your letter this morning, Mr Richard Euhner called with the petition from South Shields to the two Houses of Parliament, in favour of Rowland Hill's postage scheme.

I shall go down to the House to-day to endeavour to present the petition, but a member's turn for presentation depends upon the fortune of a ballot; and as far more members ballot daily than there is time to call upon for the presentation of their petitions, it may happen, if I am out of luck, that several days may elapse before I can bring your petitions before the House.

I entirely approve the plan, and the sailors' petition illustrates very feelingly the general benefit such a measure would prove to the industrial classes. The only scruple which can anywhere be felt will be as to the Revenue, but I think the experiment may fairly be tried: because, if it turns out that Mr Hill's anticipations of the increased communication making up for the reduced charge are unfounded, the present system might be resumed until the sources of revenue were explored, and the public would probably have so much enjoyed the remission as to make them submit cheerfully to a substituted tax, if such should be eventually found to be necessary. I believe the wishes of all ministers, and of all public men, are in favour of the plan.

It seems to me that there are changes now taking place in the distribution of labour which make the scheme very opportune. By the abolition of the settlement, by "hiring and service," a working

man is no longer restrained to his own parish, but his presence is welcome wherever his services are needed, and the rapidity of steam communication makes it comparatively easy for him to seek employment through all the quarters of the country. We may expect, therefore, that working men will be more migratory than heretofore, and families will be more widely dispersed, so that it will be chiefly by letter-writing that they will be able to keep up the domestic affections which are the greatest sweetener of life, and the parental control which is the best guarantee of good conduct.

I shall take care that Lord Brougham has the two petitions to the Lords,

And beg to remain, Doctor,

Yours faithfully,

ROBERT INGHAM.

During the course of some subsequent years, the writer's parental home was, from time to time, the scene of sickness and bereavement; and the cup of sorrow, filled to the brim, was given it to drink.* But he draws the veil of privacy over such scenes—musing pensively over the vanished hands he will no more touch, and the voices, now still, which will never again vibrate in mortal ears!

What had been the scene of professional work and of much friendly intercourse and enjoyment for upwards of six years was now to be left behind, and a new stage of life's journey begun. Through the kindness and partiality of attached friends—with one of whom it is still his privilege to have happy intercourse*—a goodly company bestowed on the writer the honours of a Complimentary Dinner on the eve of his departure. This testimony of friendly regard, it is needless to say, was much appreciated at the time, and is still held in grateful remembrance.

* Three sisters died within a fortnight, and a brother about ten months later— all of fever.

*Dr Mackinlay, Glasgow, who died in 1901.



MEDICAL WORK IN MONTROSE.

THE scene is now changed to an ancient Scottish town which holds an honourable place in the annals of the nation, and which, from its many recent improvements and natural advantages as a summer residence, is attracting to it an increased influx of visitors year by year.

New ties were formed, and a new roof-tree reared.

Upwards of half a century has passed away since that momentous step was taken, and yet, in retrospect, how short does the long period appear! "We spend our years as a tale that is told."

Trials, changes, mercies—these three words will more or less fully comprise the lot of every one who has travelled life's dusty pathway for three-score years and ten. The writer has had his personal share in all they indicate, and he desires to have a chastened spirit and a grateful heart as he calls them to remembrance.

He would here desire to acknowledge that his special daily work—now all but terminated—of ministering to the sick has been a source of much interest and happiness to him for many and many a year. No one knows better than himself with what imperfection this has often been done, even when striving to reach a high ideal. The Medical Profession is admittedly a noble one; but it is neither a sinecure nor an El Dorado. It has often to encounter emergencies which depress the spirits and impose a strain on the resources and moral tone of its followers. But while the material equivalent for bearing such burdens may often be small enough, and in many cases *nil*, there are many compensations. It is given to the obscurest member of the profession to derive comfort and strength from the assurance that, in performing his daily round of duty, he is treading in the footsteps of many illustrious men who have gone before, and who addressed themselves to similar work with devotion and success. Their name and fame endure, and constitute a precious

heritage, which it is given to him to share. And there are still higher thoughts to animate and cheer him; for ought it not to be remembered that his daily work among the sick and the afflicted links him in spirit with Him who "went about doing good," "healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people."

Then there are practical problems incident to medical life and work which constitute a wholesome and valuable mental discipline. Apathy, sluggishness, and stagnation of thought should be utterly unknown to the Practitioner of Medicine. His duties should keep him intellectually alive day by day, and place him in touch with the great mental movements going on around him.

Moreover, from his habitual contact with human suffering and sorrow, his sympathies should be drawn forth, and his best efforts prompted to alleviate and, if possible, to remove them.

In all this there springs up, and endures, a reflex beneficent influence on his own moral and spiritual nature.

No doubt the Medical Profession is not always plain sailing, nor will it ever be—human nature remaining what it is. Clients are at times fickle and fitful; and even when, in trying circumstances, devoted services have been rendered, they are not always grateful. But let it be acknowledged and rejoiced in that such instances are few, compared with those in which faithful and zealous efforts to relieve suffering have resulted in warm and life-long friendships, which the lapse of time has only strengthened, and which the hand of death alone will bring to a close. The writer has experienced such friendships, and he deems them more precious than silver or gold.

He has also pleasure in reflecting that the duties of a Medical life, exacting and absorbing as they have often proved, have not been incompatible with occasional services of a more general nature to his fellow-citizens, whose welfare, according to his opportunities, he has in various ways sought to promote. In a humble way he has also from time to time striven to fill up leisure hours, if not to the instruction and benefit of others, at least to his own harmless enjoyment,

with light literary work—contributing articles to periodicals, medical and lay. This work, or exercise, has extended over a period of more than half a century; and were his contributions judged of only by their number, their author might possibly indulge a feeling of self-complacency; but, tried by the test of merit or intrinsic value, the verdict might be sufficiently humbling.

One event in the outward current of life's history may be mentioned in a few words—namely, a visit made in the early summer of 1854 to the ancient University of St. Andrews, for the purpose of receiving from this venerable seat of learning, if deemed worthy of the honour, the degree of M.D. The object was duly attained, after the usual ordeal. The writer is thus possessed of a visible bond of union with a University, venerable for its age, and illustrious by its history. Long may St. Andrews University enjoy an honoured and prosperous career!

In this review of the more prominent facts and experiences of a long life, the writer deems it only due to his professional brethren and himself to say that during the half century and more which has passed away since he settled in his present sphere of practice, he has enjoyed a happy immunity from professional quarrels and disputes. From various medical appointments he has had the honour to hold, as well as from the emergencies of every-day professional life, he has been brought, from time to time, into close fellowship with more than one generation of his brethren; and it has been his good fortune and happiness to enjoy friendly and pleasant intercourse with them all. And the longer he lives, the deeper and more abiding becomes his conviction that the true secret of amicable relationship in professional life consists in a habitual, conscientious, and mutual observance of the golden rule laid down for our daily guidance by the highest Authority—"All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." This rule must be the soul of ethics—medical and lay—while the world endures.

A few observations of a general character may fittingly bring these Reminiscences to a conclusion. First: No member of the medical profession who has lived during the

long period which has now been under review can fail to have a profound impression of the vast progress which has been made in every department of the healing art. The discovery of Anæsthesia, and the development of Bacteriology and Asepsis, might alone signalise an entire century. These discoveries have quite revolutionised both surgery and medicine. Operations are now performed, and lives saved, in numberless cases which in former times—say, forty or fifty years ago—would have been deemed utterly hopeless. A flood of light has been shed on the etiology and progress of many diseases which were aforetime imperfectly understood. The polypharmacy which formerly prevailed has been largely superseded by an enlightened confidence in the powers of Nature, when these are untrammelled and unopposed by hostile influences from without. The rampant abuse of blood-letting has ceased; but at the same time it is worthy of consideration whether there does not still exist a legitimate sphere for its employment, which is, for the most part, overlooked and neglected.

Secondly: During the last half-century there has taken place a great awakening of the mind and conscience of all classes on the important question of public health, or hygiene. The subject has been deemed worthy of the notice and control of the Legislature of our country; and so, from time to time, wise and beneficent enactments regarding it have found their way into the Statute Book. The result has been a general improvement of sanitary arrangements, and a lowering of the death-rate in all the cities and towns of the Kingdom. Rural districts everywhere, under the active supervision of our County Councils, are falling into line with this movement; and we may confidently expect that whatever insanitary conditions still continue will, with due speed, be removed.

Third: A very painful impression has been produced throughout these many years in the mind of the writer as to the lamentable loss of life caused by the abuse of alcoholic drinks. This is only partially disclosed by our public registers of death. Organic diseases of liver, kidneys, or brain are frequently credited as the causes of death, while the real

and primary cause is alcoholism. No medical man with any length of experience can shut his eyes to the fact here stated. And this debasing vice is not restricted to the lower, and uneducated, classes of society. It too often finds its victims among those whose education and whose position in life might have been regarded as a guarantee for sobriety and for length of days. The misery wrought in various ways in society by the vice of intemperance is an oft-told tale ; but how to meet and counterwork the evil still lies as a heavy burden on the heart of philanthropy. "Local Option" is the shrieking cry with many who are ready to fight grave political battles in its name. But unless there is individual option—a choosing the good and a shunning of the evil—all mere legislative expedients will end in disappointment. The will must be exercised and disciplined, the moral nature must be more and more developed and strengthened, if intemperance, with all its train of miseries, its broken hearts, its ruined homes, its incurable diseases, and its premature graves, is ever to be rooted out of our land.

When will society be sufficiently enlightened to grapple successfully with this fell destroyer? Surely this is a consummation devoutly to be wished.

Finally: Our view of the wonderful progress achieved during the last half-century ought by no means to be bounded by the merely medical horizon; for in every direction evidence of advancement stretches far beyond that line of observation. It seems no exaggeration to say that the inventions and discoveries which have signalled the period covered by the foregoing retrospective survey have transcended in magnitude and number those of many preceding centuries. Science and art have gone hand in hand in their wonderful development; and enhanced social comfort, and accelerated national progress have thus been attained. How inadequately at the best do we estimate the wonderful achievements of electricity and steam! During the last half-century these two mighty agents—thanks to our many eminent scientists—have entirely revolutionised the conditions of our individual and social life. They minister in a thousand ways to our

daily well-being, and they are now for ever yoked to the ear of human advancement. What have they not already achieved? Enough to render the nineteenth century for ever memorable in the annals of the human race. They have modified and amended all our international relations, and given guarantees for the preservation of peace and concord, both at home and abroad. They will mightily help to usher in the universal brotherhood of nations. By an invisible chain, States and Kingdoms, far separated geographically from each other, and with wide oceans rolling between, are now bound together by the ties of what ought to be enduring and happy fellowship. In the beautiful language of Elihu Burrit, they now "whisper messages of peace with the forked tongue of lightning." And these magnificent inventions and discoveries stimulate to other achievements. Through numberless channels and in numberless spheres their ameliorating influence is daily felt, and humanity is blessed.

Whatever may be the sphere in life we individually occupy—whether the part we have been called on to play in the world's great drama has been conspicuous or obscure—it is surely something, yea, it is much, to have lived in an age of such beneficent progress. But more favoured still the lot of those who are destined, when our day is over, to fill our places and continue our works. They will start on their several paths from a higher vantage-ground than was attainable by their fathers.

"Heirs of all the ages," they will enter at once on the full and unbought possession of our advanced civilisation. Thus endowed, and thus enriched, who shall predict their future achievements?

For all who are pressing forward with eager desire and hope to enter the great arena of the world's work and warfare, we cannot cherish a warmer wish, nor pronounce a larger benediction, than that they may be enabled worthily to use, and fully to enjoy, the rich inheritance awaiting them, and to hand it down, not impaired but augmented to the generation following.

